1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

945 after delivery. If the child is still-born its body is buried at the same time.

A caul is named *kwadri* (umbrella), but no importance is attached to it, nor is it kept.

SECLUSION AFTER CHILDBIRTH

946 Two or three days after childbirth the mother and child go to the seclusion-hut, or *pushars*, the same structure being used as after the hand-burning ceremony. Various rites are performed, both when going to and leaving the seclusion-hut, and these have many points in common with those which take place before and after the hand-burning. As in that case, the procedure for the Tartharol differs considerably from that of the Teivaliol.

The general name for the ceremony of going to the *pushars* is *pòlk pòtha nir utpimi*—"to the calf back (or hind quarters) water we pour," from one of the chief features of the proceedings. The ceremony takes place either in the early morning or in the evening.

The woman who is to be secluded, whether she be Tarthar or Teivali, rubs ashes on her head and face (*pûthi adipimi*, ashes we rub), and comes out of the ordinary hut in which [824] she has been living since the delivery. She holds over her head a branch of the 'Nilgiri holly,'[1] which has spreading leaves so that it resembles an umbrella; this leafy umbrella is called *tòrikwadr*, and the act is called *tòrikwadr patipimi*, "we hold the umbrella." The head is also covered with [776] the *putkuli*. From the moment she leaves the hut the woman is very careful to keep her face turned away from the sun, not on account of its noxious influence, but in order to avoid the star or other body called Keirt, which is supposed to be near the sun. The child is carried in front of the mother by another woman, who also holds a *tòrikwadr* to shelter the infant from the evil influence of Keirt. Among the Tartharol a small artificial dairy is made, exactly as in the *urvatpimi* ceremony, and four reeds are cut to represent dairy vessels.

[1] Called by the Todas *tòri* or *tòrimul* (*Berberis nepalensis*); its leaves are used in the ordination of the *kugvalikartmokh*.

1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

161 seems at present to exist may be due, wholly or in part, to
847 the diminution of infanticide.

There is one indication that female infanticide has almost
163 entirely ceased during the last five years, and even that there may now be an excess of female births. In the table of ages given on page 469, it will be seen that the pedigrees record more girls than boys of five years and under. There is no reason why my record of such young children should have been more defective for one sex than for the other, and the proportion here may be approximately correct.

TWINS

845 Twins are called *ömumokh*, and it is the custom to kill one
847 of them, even when both are boys. If they should be girls, it is probable that both would be killed, or, at any rate, would have been killed in the past.

There is one case of twins in the genealogies. Iraveli, the wife of Kwötuli and Nudriki (8), gave birth to twins about twelve years ago. Both were boys, and I was first told that one had died shortly after birth, but later inquiries made it almost certain that the boy had been killed. Some time after the birth of the twins, one of the buffaloes of Kwötuli and Nudriki is said to have had a calf with one body, two heads, and four legs. The buffalo died before the calf was born, and the monstrosity was found by the Kotas, to whom the body was given. It was generally expected that something would happen to Kwötuli or Nudriki, but they have since been very prosperous.

THE DETERMINATION OF AGE

805 This is a suitable place to say a word about the method I
128 adopted to ascertain the ages of the Todas. Like all people at a low stage of culture, the Todas are very uncertain about their ages, though their knowledge is more accurate than that of many peoples. Every Toda knows, however, whether he is older or younger than another, this fact determining the

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

595 833 little say in the matter. Whether this is generally true of other Toda households, I cannot say, not having studied them in such intimate detail as the Melgarol (people from Melgarsh). It was Erzigwuf who would decide which of the three brothers, Mutnarsh, Kuddhue, or Munbokwutn, she would have with her for the night. She usually slept with [732] the eldest, Mutnarsh, and while I was in the Nilgiris would have nothing 845 to do with Kuddhue because he being a cripple, she feared that he was [787] the cause of her having twice given birth to twins (an evil omen with the Todas). I rarely saw the youngest, Munbokwutn, join her; so much even, that I enquired once if he ever slept with her. To which I got the reply that if he did not, he would not stay. Erzigwuf's predilection for Mutnarsh was due to her preferring him, I felt, because he had the strongest personality. He was also the eldest which, even if it did not prejudice the common wife in his favour, did undoubtedly contribute to give him the assurance and poise which attracted her.

833 I enquired which was the usual position in which these people had coitus, and heard that it was that in which the woman lies on her back with the man on top of her, between her open legs. Only the inhabitants [186] of Malabar "do it the other way round", I was told, not without a certain amount of amused sarcasm. I also heard that copulation never [352] took place, and should never do so, on the *ertilkh*, the raised earthen [513] platform which serves as a bed and seat inside a Toda *arsh*. But as I received contradictory information on this point (others assuring me that it was, on the contrary, just there that couples made love), the latter should be accepted with reservation.

842 No kind of birth control is practised at all, as is generally the case [171] all over India. This is, to a large extent, due to ignorance, and where this is not so, to religious convictions, the former of those two reasons being probably dominant with the Todas. It is so in spite of a very 831 active and varied sexual life of both sexes within the tribe, something which strikes even an untrained observer at once. Toda women, I was told by Kanvarsathi, "think of nothing else (than sexual intercourse), escaping whenever they can into the *sholas* to copulate with men of their choice". Emeneau has recorded in *Language and Social Forms: A Study of Toda Kinship Terms and Dual Descent*, p. 173 (see Bibliography), that the Todas are "vigorously and adventurously sexual". He also says, further on: "Ordinary marriages within the moiety and the freedom allowed in changing mates, and the *to:tjoff* (*terershti*) institution providing for sexual unions overstepping the boundary between the moieties give evidence of a high degree of sexual activity." He goes on

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

[Melgarsh Village]

159 621 central a figure in this family, her story should be, I think, a bit elaborated. She was born a member of the Pan clan of the Tardharsh moiety, the daughter of a woman called Monkiz of the Kiaror *modol* and officially of Tinmarsh, and a man of Pan. I say "officially" because actually Monkiz already had a husband, Ürshen of Melgarsh, by whom she was [587] expecting. But, as is very usual with the Todas, she was carried off by Tinmarsh when he heard that she was with child and, after due compensation had been paid to Ürshen, he gave her the bow and arrow in the *putsiitpimi* ceremony. Monkiz died soon after, and the newborn [846] Erzigwuf was more or less abandoned, her father going off with another woman who did not care for her at all. She would have died had it not been for Terzivel, her paternal grandmother, who took her to the *mod* Natersh and looked after her. At a very early age, as is the Toda custom, she was married to her *matchuni* (cross-cousin), Kishkil of Kiaror. [687] When she came of age, she was married to Alvurvishk of Karsh, who paid six buffaloes to Kishkil in compensation for taking her away. She had no children by this husband, who actually died soon after the wedding. He was succeeded by Mutnarsh of Melgarsh and his brothers, her present husbands. She at first had four still-born children, for which 159 621 the family roundly abused her; she was very depressed by this and wanted to commit suicide, but could never actually bring herself to do it. ●845 Then she went to Palani in the plains (a Tamil temple famous for its [762] pilgrimages) and made a vow to the deity. Soon after, she was again [842] expecting, and this time she gave birth to her first son, Pershrörsh. Then she had the other two children, and again went to Palani as, after Pengalam, six years passed without her having any more children. Mutnarsh went with her, and they both prayed in the temple, she for a boy and he for a girl, each without knowing about the other. The result was Sodup [777] and Sodam, a pair of twins which the Todas consider very unlucky (in olden days one of them was immediately put to death). In this case, however, the *teuol* (Toda seer) when consulted told them that it was all right, because obviously their wish had been fulfilled after she and Mutnarsh had, in ignorance of each other, prayed for a child of different sex. They later returned again to Palini, and the twins which were born when I was at Melgarsh came, it was called, as a result of this last pilgrimage. How they were received will be narrated below. Erzigwuf had a lover, Kalorst of Pier, for some time (two years), as is the cus- 159 621 tom with Todas, but eventually Mutnarsh quarrelled with him and he left. She seems very happy in her present family life, and is always sur- [837] rounded by her children who cling to her like chicks to a hen.

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

[Melgarsh Village]

264 Mutnarsh and his family in an excellent bowl of rice which had been
123 prepared specially for me. We all ate with our fingers, with the right hand, as is the Indian custom.

512 In the afternoon, the gardeners would return from their work before 5 o'clock, while the women would sit about sewing and embroidering *putkulis*. The children would play, and those men who stayed behind, like Motsod for instance, would either sleep or receive visitors from other *munds*. After 5 p.m. the buffaloes were brought back, they would [234] be milked again by the *tarvalikartmokh* and then put away in the pen, while Narjilkh would see to it that the calves were in for the night. Kuddhue would churn the milk in the dairy-temple, and the buttermilk and the butter would be brought out by his attendants to be handed over to the women at the precise spot (marked with an upright stone) beyond [264] which they are not allowed. The evening meal would be eaten and everybody would go to bed early, practically immediately after sunset (7 p.m.).

[123] When I worked only half a day with these people, I would usually stay with them from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. talking and watching what was going on. This seemed to be the best time in which to get information from the Todas.

3. THE POLYANDROUS UNIT

844 Approximately two weeks after I had arrived in the Nilgiris, on the 18th
845 May, 1949, Erzigwuf gave birth to twins for the second time. It was about 8 p.m. when she felt unmistakable pains. She immediately got on to the *kitten* of the room she lived in and assuming a kneeling position, [606] called for Silidz, her mother-in-law, who came at once to assist her. A first child, a boy, was born without difficulty, and, the pains continuing, half an hour later a little girl also made her appearance, who was taken out, like the first baby, from behind by Silidz. The latter cut the cords with a pair of scissors, tied the remaining stumps tightly with hair and [278] smeared the wounds with an astringent root from the marshes which the Todas call *poli*; she next went away from the *arsh* and buried the cords and the afterbirth in a hole which she made in the ground. The new-born babies were washed in hot water and with soap (bought in the bazaar), and laid to rest with their mother, who had by now moved back to the *ertilkh* where she was resting on her back. She did not start to
853 feed them before the next day.
845 When I saw her then, in the evening, she was sitting on the *kitten*, naked to the waist, suckling one of the babies from her left breast. She

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

[Melgarsh Village]

complained that she was not feeling too well, and that she really did not have enough milk for twins a second time. The babies appeared quite well, the one who was presented to me as the girl seeming better and stronger than the other. Mutnarsh arrived soon after; he told me too that twins again were an impossible burden for his wife and himself, that Erzigwuf could not possibly feed them both, and ended up by asking me for some brandy for the mother, to which request I did not accede, as it is the Toda practice to distribute brandy to others on the occasion of a birth, and I suspected that that was the real motive of the demand. Besides, prohibition exists in the State of Madras, and it is impossible to obtain brandy except for medical purposes, this even being tied up with considerable formalities. The complaints about the difficulty of feeding twins made me suspect at once that, in accordance with Toda practice, it was not proposed to let more than one of them live, and that preferably the girl would be left to die. However, during the next days, Erzigwuf looked much better (she went out for a walk round the house on the 20th, in the evening) and so did the children, and I began to lose my suspicions.

I enquired who was the father, and I was assured that it was Mutnarsh. Kuddhue, since the first lot of twins were born, was not allowed near Erzigwuf, she told me, as she had the dreadful impression that they might be the result of his infirmities. Munbokwutn had had only fleeting intercourse with her, and that after her return from Palani with Mutnarsh, and after she knew herself to be pregnant. The other children were not jealous of the new babies, I was told, and from personal observation I gathered that this was correct. Both Sodup and Sodam seemed to have as much a share of their mother as before, both having been weaned from her some months earlier.

On the 24th May, the birth ceremony described by Rivers (*The Todas*, p. 324) under the name of *polk potha nit utpimi* took place. Readers are referred to that author for details of the ritual, but it can roughly be said that it is one in which the recently delivered mother is escorted to a *puzharsh* or seclusion-hut where she will remain in impurity until a few days before the next full moon, (in Erzigwuf's case, she remained there for only three days, as the new moon was just about due).

The ceremony took place in accordance with the prescribed rules, and Erzigwuf was accompanied by Mutnarsh and Silidz. What was unusual, however, was that when the part in which water is drunk out of bamboo tubes was reached, Sodup who was standing with the rest of

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

[Melgarsh Village]

them to do this they would a) continue when adult, b) spoil their health by doing so. The method for overcoming the "evil" is to administer *tworkh* on the genitals, as on the buttocks for insanitary lapses. (Incidentally Ersigwuf admitted that she also made use of these nettles on the mouths of her children when they bit her, and on their fingers, when they pinched her and pulled her hair.) Masturbation, as a result, is less intensive, but does, all the same, continue, she said, until the fourth year. Then there is a period of calm (latency?) until the twelfth year.

My interpreter here put in his own version. He said that Erzigwuf was not telling the truth, and that he had observed other things with his own children. They carried on with masturbation until the ninth year inclusive, and what was apparently latency, thus lasted for only three years. He also mentioned that in his day the punishments employed were much more drastic. A horrible one that he remembers consisted of having the wrists tied behind the back, the cloak fastened tightly over arms and legs and to be put, thus trussed up, at the entrance to the buffalo pen when the animals rushed out either in the morning or in the evening. It was here that Kanvarsathi told me that Pangur, the adult son of the Teivilkh chieftain Piliar of Kuur *mad*, had never really given up masturbating because, in his opinion, he had been too repressed in his activity as a child and had thus never grown out of the habit.

Premarital relations between young people after puberty are not discouraged with the Todas, provided they take place within the permissibe marital rules of the tribe, i.e. outside the *polkhliol* and *modol*, but within the moiety. Thus, premarital relations with a *matchuni* are considered quite normal, and should a child result from them, there is no harm done, as, officially, they are not premarital realations at all, but those of a wedded couple, even if the marriage took place in very early childhood.

I asked Erzigwuf if Pershrörsh, the eldest boy, who had attained the age of puberty, had any relations with girls, and her answer was that he probably had, as he was most of the time away from Melgarsh and she could not get him to stay, although she had asked him to, since Mutnarsh was very busy in the Botanical Gardens. Narjilkh, she said, was too young for such things, and Pengelam also, although the latter, a girl, would be watched more as she grew older.

Three days after the family had entered the *puzharsh*, I went to see them come out and return to the *mad*. I noticed that of the two newborn twins, the boy looked very sick, while the girl was strong and healthy. In order to keep the little one alive, and because Erzigwuf was

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

[Melgarsh Village]

still complaining that she had insufficient milk for both, I went to the bazaar and bought he a tin of Glaxo and a bottle of Gripe-ease. On the 30th May, there was a definite change. The boy started looking better, while the girl's health began to decline. Motsod had been to my bungalow early in the morning to ask me to come, as the little girl twin, he said, was unwell. She certainly looked listless and weak, and I wondered how this could have come about so quickly. I suspected that she was not being fed properly, and I imagined it was because the Todas had, all the same, decided to let her die, in accordance with their ancient custom of female infanticide, and of doing away with one of a pair of twins.

I went to the local government hospital, and requested the assistance of the Indian practitioner in charge, but he refused to come along, giving as an excuse that he could not possibly create a precedent by attending aboriginals at their homes. I tried to persuade Erzigwuf to travel to the hospital in my car, but she refused, saying that she was not well enough, and that the baby, besides, was too sick to stand the trip. Karnos put a word in too, stating that Western medicine was no good in a case like this, and that it was better for the child to remain at the *mad*. There was much wailing and crying over the bad health of the child, however, and to anybody unacquainted with Toda customs, this behaviour would have appeared perfectly genuine.

On the morning of the 31st, Munbokwutn turned up at my bungalow at 7.30 a.m. with the news that the child had died. I went immediately to Melgarsh and found them all assembled in the front room of the *Warthutthiarsh* (where all clan members must be brought, even from outlying *mads*, to die), wailing and lamenting loudly over the death of the baby. Toda visitors started arriving to take part in the mourning, and one of the first to crawl into the house on hands and knees, howling and sobbing ritually, was Erzigwuf's father, Tinmarsh of Pan *modol*. It all appeared perfectly real, and one nearly felt sorry for Mutnarsh, who was sitting outside the *arsh*, crying his eyes out, while Sodup, either from fright or in imitation, joined him heartily. Sodam, nearby, was quite indifferent as was also Munbokwutn, the youngest father. Only later, some four months afterwards did the Todas admit to my wife that they had let the little girl die, so that really all this exhibition of grief was purely conventional and, if not completely hypocritical, at least due to feelings of guilt or to the depressing effect which inexorable customs may have on people of this kind.

The funeral took place on June 1st, and as is the Toda custom, the little girl's dead body was first ceremoniously "wedded" to her *matchuni*,

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

142
291
302
516
●845

Fig. 28. Erzigwuf with Peteroza, Mutnarsh and the twins, Sodup and Sodam.

142
291
302
793

Fig. 29. Kuddhue.

[P 300-D]